

The Most Played and Best Known Pasodoble of Them All

El Gato Montés



MANUEL PENELLA

By Hugh Hosch and Art Diaz

One does not have to be too far into one's development as an aficionado before realizing that the pasodoble he or she hears more than any other at the plaza de toros when a torero is performing well is *El Gato Montés*. We used to wonder why this was, and then over time the story of this great musical icon of the bullring was revealed in bits and pieces. With the worldwide revival in 1992 by Plácido Domingo of its original vehicle, the opera of the same name, the facts became more familiar to taurinos -- and to music lovers in general.

One acquaintance whose Spanish is a bit below par told us he thought *El Gato Montés* meant "Monty's Gate," and he wanted to know who this Monty was. We clarified for him the proper translation, "The Wildcat," whereupon he asked what a feline had to do with bullfighting. Thus a brief explanation of terms and of the pasodoble's story seemed to be in order. And in recounting the tale for our friend, it dawned on us that it might be a topic of interest to many taurinos, experienced ones as well as novices. So here goes: you have your entrada in your hand;

please feel free to take your seat and mentally enjoy the stirring strains of *El Gato Montés* and its fascinating saga.

NOTE OF WARNING TO MUSIC LOVERS: While we like music, we must point out that this article leans more heavily toward taurine, rather than music, appreciation. We confess that we prefer the coleta to the ponytail.

We can't remember for sure, but it is entirely possible that *El Gato Montés* was the first pasodoble we ever heard. One thing is for certain, however: it is the one we have heard *most* since our afición began -- and even before that.